

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /058 W
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R 011300Z MAR 77
FM AMCONSUL QUEBEC
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INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUEBEC 0086

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJECT: QUEBEC LIBERALS POSTPONE LEADERSHIP BATTLE

SUMMARY: QUEBEC LIBERAL PARTY GOVERNING COUNCIL MET IN QUEBEC CITY
OVER PAST WEEKEND. PUBLIC FIGHT WAS AVOIDED THROUGH DEFT
INTERVENTION OF INTERIM LEADER, GERARD D. LEVESQUE. DECISION ON NEW
LEADER FOR PARTY WAS PUT OFF FOR AT LEAST A YEAR UNTIL
PASSIONS CALM AND DECISIONS ON FUTURE POLITICAL ORIENTATION ARE
MADE. LEADING CANDIDATES FOR LEADERSHIP AT PRESENT ARE:
CLAUDE CASTONGUAY, A FORMER MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS;
RAYMOND GARNEAU, FORMER FINANCE MINISTER AND CANDIDATE OF
THE TRADITIONAL LIBERAL ESTABLISHMENT; CLAUDE FORGET, FORMER
SOCIAL AFFAIRS MINISTER; AND GERARD D. LEVESQUE HIMSELF.
END SUMMARY

1. QUEBEC PROVINCIAL LIBERAL PARTY GOVERNING COUNCIL MET OVER PAST
WEEK-
END IN QUEBEC CITY FOR FIRST TIME SINCE THEIR NOVEMBER 15 ELECTORAL
FIASCO. STILL SMARTING FROM DEFEAT AND BADLY DIVIDED OVER FUTURE
ORIENTATION, THE LIBERALS NONETHELESS WERE SUCCESSFUL IN
AVOIDING OPEN DISPUTE. PRINCIPAL CREDIT FOR POST-
PONING THE INEVITABLY ACrimonious LEADERSHIP BATTLE UNTIL A TIME WHEN
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TEMPERS MAY HAVE COOLED, MUST GO TO THE INTERIM LEADER,
GERARD D. LEVESQUE.

2. PROMINENT AMONG EVENTUAL CANDIDATES FOR LEADERSHIP IS CLAUDE
CASTONGUAY WHO, ACCORDING TO "LE DEVOIR" OF FEBRUARY 28, HAS BEEN
OFFERED CHAIRMANSHIP OF STRATEGIC "POLITICAL ORIENTATION
COMMITTEE." (COMMENT: FORMER LIBERAL MINISTER JEAN-PAUL L'ALLIER

RECENTLY TOLD ME IN CONFIDENCE THAT HE DOUBTS CASTONGUAY'S WIFE, WHO REPORTEDLY EXERCISES CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE OVER HER HUSBAND, WOULD ALLOW CASTONGUAY TO ACCEPT PARTY LEADERSHIP.

3. FORMER FINANCE MINISTER, RAYMOND CARNEAU, ALL BUT ANNOUNCED HIS CANDIDACY OVER WEEKEND. HE IS SEEN AS REPRESENTING MORE CONSERVATIVE LIBERAL ESTABLISHMENT AND IS SAID TO BE COMMITTED TO TRUDEAU STYLE CENTRALIZED FEDERALISM.

4. ANOTHER LIBERAL WHO HAS BEEN FREQUENTLY MENTIONED AS POTENTIAL LEADER IS FORMER MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS CLAUDE FORGET. HE COULD EASILY EMERGE AS THE CANDIDATE OF THE MORE PROGRESSIVE QUEBECOIS NATIONALIST WING OF THE PARTY. (SEE ALSO QUEBEC 0068).

5. THE "OTHER LEVESQUE" (GERARD D.), WHO NOW SERVES AS INTERIM LEADER, SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN AS A POTENTIAL PERMANENT PARTY CHIEF. HE HAS DELAYED LEADERSHIP CHOICE MAINLY TO AVOID OPEN FIGHT WITHIN PARTY CIRCLES. HOWEVER, THIS DELAY MAY ALSO BENEFIT HIS OWN CANDIDACY BY GIVING HIM TIME TO SOLIDIFY HIS HOLD ON PARTY MACHINERY AND TO INSERT PEOPLE BEHOLDEN TO HIM INTO KEY POSITIONS WITHIN PARTY STRUCTURE.

6. COMMENT: IN RECENT CONVERSATION WITH ME, "THE OTHER LEVESQUE" REJECTED IDEA OF LIBERALS JOINING IN A FEDERALIST COALITION WITH "UNION NATIONALE." HE ASSERTED, WITH DEAD PAN, THAT UN IS TOO BLATANTLY

OPPORTUNISTIC. GERARD LEVESQUE ALSO SEES POSSIBILITY OF POLITICAL REALIGNMENT SHOULD P.Q. DROP INDEPENDENCE COMMITMENT. IN TERMS SUSPICIOUSLY SIMILAR TO THOSE USED RECENTLY BY J-P L'ALLIERS
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(QUEBEC 0068), LEVESQUE SAID MORE PROGRESSIST ELEMENTS IN P.Q. MIGHT FORM SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC PARTY WHILE P.Q. MODERATES JOIN LIBERALS IN PARTY ORIENTED SLIGHTLY TO RIGHT OF CENTER.
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Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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